OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME,
BOILERHOUSE
~~(Ohio Veterans' Home~~ (Powerhouse)
U. S. Route 250 at DeWitt Avenue
Sandusky
Erie County
Ohio

HABS No. OH-2360-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME, HABS NO. OH-2360-A
BOILER HOUSE
~~(Ohio Veterans' Home~~ (Powerhouse)

HABS
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Location: U.S. Route 250 at DeWitt Avenue, Sandusky, Erie County, Ohio 44870

USGS Sandusky Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 17.359560.4586520

Present Owner: State of Ohio, Department of Administrative Services

Present Occupant: Ohio Veterans' Home

Present Use: Residential and nursing/medical facility for Ohio military veterans

Significance: The Ohio Veterans' Home was established in 1886 as the Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, the result of efforts by the Grand Army of the Republic to ensure state care for sick and destitute Ohio Civil War veterans. The Home opened in November, 1888 with 17 residents. During its peak years it had over 2,000 residents, and since its opening it has served over 55,000 Ohio veterans from all major U.S. conflicts. The name was changed to Ohio Veterans' Home in 1979. Current population is about 550.

The Home is the legacy of Ohio's movement in the 19th century to establish state-supported institutions to aid the handicapped, the ill and the destitute.

For an overview of the Home, see HABS No. OH-2360.

The Boiler House was an original building at the Home, completed in 1888. Its function was to supply heating steam, electric light, and domestic hot water for the entire Home. It still provides steam and hot water today.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection:

The Boiler House was completed in 1888.

2. Architect:

Construction of the entire Home was under the supervision of Henry C. Lindsay, architect, of Zanesville, Ohio. Landscaping and design of the grounds was by Herman Haerline of Cincinnati.

3. Original and subsequent owners:

The Home has always been owned by the State of Ohio and was created by an act of the state legislature in 1886.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:

Board minutes do not indicate who built the Boiler House. The firm of Douzbach & Decker did construct several cottages, and it submitted bids for the Dining Hall and the Boiler House. It is likely that this firm built the Boiler House.

5. Original plans and construction:

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home resulted from an act of the legislature in 1886 which created a board of trustees empowered to select a site and arrange for construction of the Home. The board was further required to oversee operation of the Home after its completion.

The act resulted from efforts by the Grand Army of the Republic, Department of Ohio, to provide care for honorably discharged Ohio Civil War veterans who were disabled or required other assistance in living. The G.A.R., formed by Union Army veterans immediately after the Civil War, became a formidable lobbying force at both the state and the national levels, and it aggressively looked after veterans' interests for many years.

Starting July 1, 1886, the new board reviewed sites in 14 Ohio communities. On July 30, after eight ballots, Sandusky received three of five board member votes and was chosen as the Home's location. 100 acres three miles southeast of the downtown area were acquired, and the City of Sandusky agreed to lay water, sewer and gas lines and to ensure extension of a street railway to the site.

Seven architects submitted sketches of proposed designs for the Home, and on September 1, 1886 Henry C. Lindsay was selected as architect for the project. On the same day, Herman Haerline was chosen as Landscape Engineer.

Haerline's plans for the grounds were approved by the board on March 1, 1887. On March 17, the board approved Lindsay's designs for the Administration Building, Dining Hall, Laundry, Bath House, Boiler House, Chapel, Hospital, and three styles of residential cottages. There were to be twelve cottages, four in each of the three styles (eventually sixteen were built).

Contracts for the first buildings, some of the cottages, were awarded on April 20, 1888. A cornerstone laying took place on July 20, 1888. The Home opened on November 19, 1888, with 17 residents. The Mess Hall, Boiler House, Laundry and Cottage "F" were then complete.

In May of 1890, the board authorized construction of the Stable, Surgeon's Cottage, Quartermaster's Cottage, and workshops. In September of that year, Lindsay was instructed to prepare plans for a library and an assembly hall.

All the principal buildings were constructed of local Sandusky blue limestone, quarried on the site. The quarries, in the western portion of the grounds, today are three large duck ponds. Construction continued until 1908, though most of the major buildings were completed by 1894.

The Boiler House was among the earliest buildings, since it provided heating steam for the entire property. Dates of its construction are not known precisely, but it was in operation by opening day on November 19, 1888.

6. Alterations and additions:

The Boiler House, Laundry and Bath House were originally separate free-standing structures. The Laundry (which included an electric light plant) was just west of the Boiler House, and the Bath House (which included the barber shop) was just west of the Laundry. All were built of local blue limestone in the restrained Romanesque Revival style common to all of the Home's original buildings.

The three buildings remained separate at least as late as 1896, but by 1930 they had been linked by stone infill construction to create a single building.

Some time after 1961, the Bath House and Laundry portions were demolished, leaving the Boiler House once again free-standing.

By this time it had become known as the Powerhouse.

The Boiler House underwent other modifications at unknown dates. Originally it was a simple rectangular structure one story in height, with a hipped roof topped by a monitor running the length of the ridge. A tall brick smokestack stood along the building's east side.

Probably because of the rapid pace of construction of facilities at the Home, the Boiler House appears to have been too small to provide adequate service. It was expanded by construction of a rectangular addition off its southeast corner, increasing its size by about half. The addition was two stories in height and was built of the same local limestone and in the same style as the original structure. The addition appears always to have had a flat roof, and it probably was during the addition's construction that the hipped roof of the original building was removed and replaced with a flat roof hidden behind a tall stone parapet wall.

The addition then appears to have been altered, again at an unknown date, by construction of an extension on its south side. This was built of brick with a stucco coating. In the southwest ell created by the two blocks of the Boiler House there have been several storage sheds or bins for coal. These were generally of wood construction, though the most recent one was of steel frame construction dating probably from the 1970s.

B. Historical Context:

Ohio was a leader in establishing state institutions for the handicapped and disabled. As early as the 1820s, the state had established a facility for the care and education of the deaf, and other similar institutions followed during the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1870s there were facilities for the deaf, the blind, the mentally retarded and the insane. These were generally headquartered in Columbus, the capital, but branch institutions were established in other parts of Ohio as well.

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home was an extension of this government-supported "helping hand" attitude, an attitude strongly urged along, in this case, by the lobbying efforts of the Grand Army of the Republic. The G.A.R., formed by Union Army veterans shortly after the end of the Civil War, disavowed any political ambitions or purpose, but in fact the organization vociferously fought for and protected Union veterans' interests. In such areas as unpaid enlistment bounties, care of deceased veterans' orphans, establishment of memorials, construction of county memorial buildings, and veterans' pensions, the G.A.R. was a potent force throughout the late 19th century and into the 20th. Spurred by a

sense of obligation to the former soldiers and sailors who had preserved the Union in the 1860s (something which G.A.R. members were happy to remind people), both the national and state governments responded generously. They established veterans' and orphans' homes, war memorials, and memorial meeting halls, and they appropriated aid for indigent soldiers and their families, provided for burial of deceased veterans, and passed laws giving state employment preference to honorably discharged veterans.

The G.A.R. was organized along military lines, with commanders and quartermasters and the like, and with statewide organizations known as departments. Each state department was composed of various local organizations known as posts, membership in which might range from just a few men in small towns to several thousand in the large cities. Histories of the G.A.R. indicate that recruitment of members and then getting members to attend meetings and support the organization were a continuing source of trouble. However, even in periods of low membership and seemingly little potential political influence, the G.A.R. was able to accomplish a remarkable amount and achieve many of its goals. This was perhaps aided by the fact that many public figures and politicians were G.A.R. men and were thus a ready audience for the appeals of the "old soldiers."

The G.A.R.'s Department of Ohio came into being with the organization of the first posts in mid-1866. Records apparently are incomplete as to which was the first post, but organization proceeded rapidly and the first Annual Encampment (meeting) was held in Columbus in January of 1867, with 135 posts reported as having been created. Membership increased rapidly at first, then declined, probably as a result of gradual cooling of war passions as time went on. At the end of 1868, 303 posts were reported in Ohio, but by 1873 there were only 19 posts, with 800 members. This fell to eight posts and 368 members by 1875.

Remarkably, membership increased dramatically in the 1880s. By the end of 1881, 200 posts with 8,647 members were reported, and by late 1884 there were nearly 28,000 Ohio members of the G.A.R. This rapid increase matched what was occurring in the organization nationally. Membership hovered between 27,000 and 30,000 nationally until the late 1870s, then shot up to 365,000 by 1887. This appears to have been due to the aging of the Civil War veteran population and the realization that G.A.R. membership could enhance one's social and economic situation late in life.

The Department of Ohio could claim a number of accomplishments, even during its lean years of low membership. Those who were members in the late 1860s and early 1870s appear to have been energetic and astute politically. Their greatest accomplishment of the period was establishment of the Soldiers' and Sailors'

Orphans' Home at Xenia, Ohio in the early 1870s. Other lobbying efforts directed at the Ohio legislature during the 1870s resulted in relief from taxation for real estate used by G.A.R. posts; provision of state support for indigent soldiers and sailors and their families; state payment of burial costs for veterans; construction of numerous war memorials and memorial meeting halls; and preference in state employment.

The Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home at Sandusky was a direct result of G.A.R. lobbying. At Ohio's 1886 Annual Encampment, Department Commander R.B. Brown reported that as a result of visits during the preceding year to posts throughout the state, he had acquired the "unspeakably painful intelligence that many old Soldiers had been compelled to accept homes in the County Infirmaries." The total was 382 soldiers.

Brown found this unacceptable, feeling that Ohio's Civil War veterans deserved better and indeed were entitled to some reward by the state for their loyal service. To him the answer was a state soldiers' and sailors' home.

Brown's fellow G.A.R. member, Ohio Governor Foraker, assisted in calling a large meeting of G.A.R. members in mid-February, 1886, and by early March a bill had been introduced in the General Assembly. All G.A.R. posts were provided with a copy and were urged to write in support, which occurred and which resulted in passage of a $50,000 appropriation by late April. Later bills provided additional funding.

The Home was intended as a residential facility where veterans could live out their lives for free, but it also had hospital and nursing-care facilities for those needing such care. The breathtaking speed with which the idea of a state home was conceived and made into law was equaled by the rapidity with which the Home itself was built. It took only a little more than two years from the appointment of the first board of trustees in 1886 to the opening of the first buildings in Sandusky in November of 1888.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character:

The Boiler House is built of local Sandusky blue limestone, as are all the major buildings at the Home. Like the other buildings, its walls are of the blue limestone and trim elements are of red sandstone.

The Home's buildings generally are constructed in a simple Romanesque Revival style, the hallmarks of which are the extensive use of masonry; a generally massive, heavy feeling; use of round-arched window and door openings (though not exclusively); and a relatively small window-to-wall ratio in comparison with other styles.

The Boiler House was built as a utilitarian structure and had less ornamentation and detailing than most of the other buildings. Its original portion had few windows; the ones it did have were small and round-headed and were set high in the wall in clusters.

The addition was larger and boxier and had even less ornamentation than the original portion. Its windows were rectangular and were not trimmed in red sandstone as those in the original portion were.

The architectural integrity of both portions of the Boiler House has been affected by the removal of the original portion's hipped roof and replacement with a flat roof; and by the construction of an extension on the south side of the addition. This was executed in brick with a stucco coating, and it is not compatible with the stone walls of the addition and the original structure.

2. Condition of fabric:

The Boiler House is in fair condition. Its walls are structurally sound, but the entire building shows many years of wear and use. The various alterations, such as the extension of the addition and the construction, removal and reconstruction of coal bins along the south side, have resulted in a building with a patched-up and unattractive appearance. The stucco is peeling in some locations; downspouts have caused rust streaking on the stone walls; and electric lines and other attachments have been applied to the building over the years.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

The original portion of the building measures 35 by 40 feet. The addition and its extension measure 25 by 40 feet. The north elevation of the addition is set back 27 feet from the original portion's elevation. Thus the two portions overlap by 13 feet at the southeast corner of the original structure.

2. Foundations:

The building is set on a stone foundation, the foundation material being the same as that in the walls. The bedrock in this area is

just a few inches below the surface of the ground, so foundations are not very deep.

3. Walls:

The building is of bearing-wall construction, the material being the local Sandusky blue limestone quarried on the site. The stone is coursed ashlar, with beltcourses, cornices and window and door trim of red sandstone.

4. Structural system, framing:

There is no interior structure except that of the roof and various structural elements for the boilers, coal hoppers, piping and water tanks, all of which are done in structural steel. In both portions of the building, the roof is supported by flat trusses made up of welded and riveted steel angles.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads:

The building has none of these features.

6. Chimneys:

The brick smokestack along the east wall was removed at some time in the past. The building now has three short round steel stacks serving the three boilers. The stacks are placed within the flat roof of the addition and rise no more than about eight to ten feet.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

An original doorway survives in the north wall of the original portion near the northeast corner of the building. The opening is round-arched and is about three times the width of a standard doorway. It probably had a pair of large swinging doors originally. Today it has a standard-sized wooden door centered in the opening, with blank wooden panels to either side. There is a rectangular three-light transom over the door, and a four-light round-arched transom above that. The doorway arch springs from a beltcourse placed just above head height. A modern garage door has been cut into the east wall of the original portion of the building.

The addition has a large opening in its north wall which is covered by a rolling steel door. A small door is in the east wall. It is set into what appears to be an original opening, but the door is of recent date and is made of tongue-and-groove

wooden siding. The same siding fills the transom above the door.

b. Windows and shutters:

What appear to be original windows survive in the original portion. They are of two sizes: standard-sized double-hung windows with fixed round-arched transoms, and smaller windows of the same configuration but only about half the height of the others. The larger windows are both two-over-two and one-over-two in design; the smaller ones are all one-over-one. All windows are arched and have red sandstone trim. The small windows are set high in the wall, the red sandstone beltcourse forming a continuous sill for them. The small windows occur in a cluster of three on the east wall and a cluster of four in the western portion of the north wall. One large window is in the north wall, placed west of the doorway; and three large windows are in the east wall.

Windows in the addition are all rectangular and consist of three-part steel industrial-type sash. All windows are at the second-floor level (though there is no second-floor structure); there are no windows on the first floor.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering:

The building's roof, on both portions, is flat, consisting of built-up roofing on metal pan decks.

b. Cornice, eaves:

There are no cornices or eaves. The building has a tall plain parapet, topped by tile copings.

c. Dormers, cupolas, towers:

The building has none of these features.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Basement:

The building has no basement.

b. First floor:

The building has only a single floor; though the addition is two stories in height, there is no upper floor structure. The plan in each portion of the building is rectangular.

2. Stairways:

The building has no stairways.

3. Flooring:

Flooring in both portions is poured concrete.

4. Wall and ceiling finish:

Interior walls are painted in a grey and white scheme. The paint is applied directly to the masonry walls.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

There is only a single interior doorway, which connects to two portions of the building at the point they intersect. Exterior doors are painted wood.

b. Windows:

The original portion of the building has painted wooden sash. The addition has painted steel industrial-style sash.

6. Decorative features and trim:

The building has none of these features.

7. Hardware:

Any hardware, such as door knobs, locks, hinges and so on, is utilitarian and simple in character. No historic hardware from the building's early years appears to have survived.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

The Boiler House serves two main functions: it provides all domestic hot water for the Home, and it provides steam for heating all the Home's buildings.

No historic equipment survives. A stationary steam engine once ran generating equipment to provide electrical power,

but it was located in the building west of the powerhouse (now demolished) and has not survived.

Current equipment is of recent date. The original portion of the building contains several large horizontal tanks which hold domestic hot water. These are made of steel and are covered with insulating material. Adjacent to them are steam-powered feedwater pumps. The domestic water is heated by steam.

The addition houses the three steam boilers. Two are coal-fired and date from 1978. They are E. Keeler Co. Water Tube Boilers and were built in Williamsport, Pa. The third boiler, a gas-fired boiler providing standby service, dates from 1969 and is also a Keeler product. Capacity of each boiler is 15,000 pounds of steam per hour. The coal-fired boilers are equipped with Detroit Unistoker automatic stokers, built by the Detroit Stoker Company. The latest patent date on the stokers is 1959, so they date from that year or later.

The building houses no air-conditioning or ventilation equipment.

b. Lighting:

The building has simple, utilitarian lighting. Both bare hanging bulbs and hanging shaded fixtures are in use.

c. Plumbing:

The building has a complex network of piping, all associated with its functions of water heating and steam generation.

The steam distribution system radiates from the powerhouse. A ten-inch line carries steam from the powerhouse in a below-grade concrete-lined tunnel which is located largely beneath the existing pattern of sidewalks. The ten-inch line runs east and west from the powerhouse, splitting into four main trunks. Service to the cottages and all other buildings is by four-inch lines branching from the main lines.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation:

The 100-acre site of the Ohio Veterans' Home is in a southwest-northeast orientation. The entire site is flat, except for the lakes near the west end, where the water surface is several feet below adjacent ground level.

The Boiler House is located just north of the Home's southern

boundary and is one of several maintenance/storage and support buildings located in a row running east and west. There are no trees in the vicinity of the Boiler House, and paved roads surround it.

The building's north elevation looks north toward the Dining Hall, which is placed in the center of the oval-shaped ring of residential cottages which dominates the southeastern quarter of the Home's site.

2. Historic landscape design:

When the Home opened in 1888, the entire site had very few trees and was quite flat and featureless. Site design appears to have been focused mainly on building placement and roadway location, with a recognition that, in time, trees would grow and fill in some of the open spaces. This has in fact happened, and the site today has numerous large trees.

As originally planned, most of the Home's buildings were concentrated in the eastern half of the site. Thirteen of the cottages formed a ring around the Dining Hall, and three others were located to the east along an entry road. Utility and support buildings were concentrated along the south edge of the site, and west of the cottages were the Library, Assembly Hall, and nursing and hospital facilities. The lakes formed by quarrying were next to the west, and a cemetery occupied the west end of the site. The entire northern half of the site was always open space. This historic plan remains largely intact today.

3. Outbuildings:

There are no outbuildings associated with the Boiler House.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Original Architectural Drawings:

These are not available.

B. Early Views:

Miller, John C. Souvenir Book of Views, Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home (Sandusky, Ohio: Alvord & Peters Co.), n.d.

Spies, August. Spies' Gallery of Photo-Engravings - Soldiers' and Sailors' Home Sandusky, Ohio, (Sandusky, Ohio: Privately published), 1896.

Witteman, A. Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home Near Sandusky, (New

York: The Albertype Co.), 1894.

C. Interviews:

None was conducted.

D. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Board of Trustees minutes, Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, 1886-1911.

Proceedings of 20th, 21st and 22nd Annual Encampments, Department of Ohio, G.A.R., Ohio Historical Society archives.

"Ohio's Pride. The Soldiers' and Sailors' Home," Sandusky Register, November 19, 1888.

State of Ohio real estate inventory, 1961.

"History of Ohio Veterans' Home," unpublished typescript, n.d.

2. Secondary and published sources:

Beath, Robert B. History of the Grand Army of the Republic (New York: Bryan, Taylor & Co.), 1889.

Dearing, Mary R. Veterans in Politics (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press), 1952.

Hiss, James E. "Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1974-75.

Miller, John C. Insights to Life at the Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home (Sandusky, Ohio: Alvord & Peters Co.), 1917.

_____. Souvenir Program of the 50th Anniversary, Ohio Soldiers' and Sailors' Home, 1938.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The existing powerhouse is to be replaced by a new steam generating plant with funding assistance from the Veterans' Administration. Federal funding is $2.275 million, and state funding through resident assessments is $1.537 million. The new plant will have gas-fired boilers with fuel oil back-up, and the use of coal will be discontinued. The new plant is immediately

west of the existing, and the existing powerhouse will be demolished when the new plant is completed.

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Affiliation: Benjamin D. Rickey & Co.
Date: November, 1989

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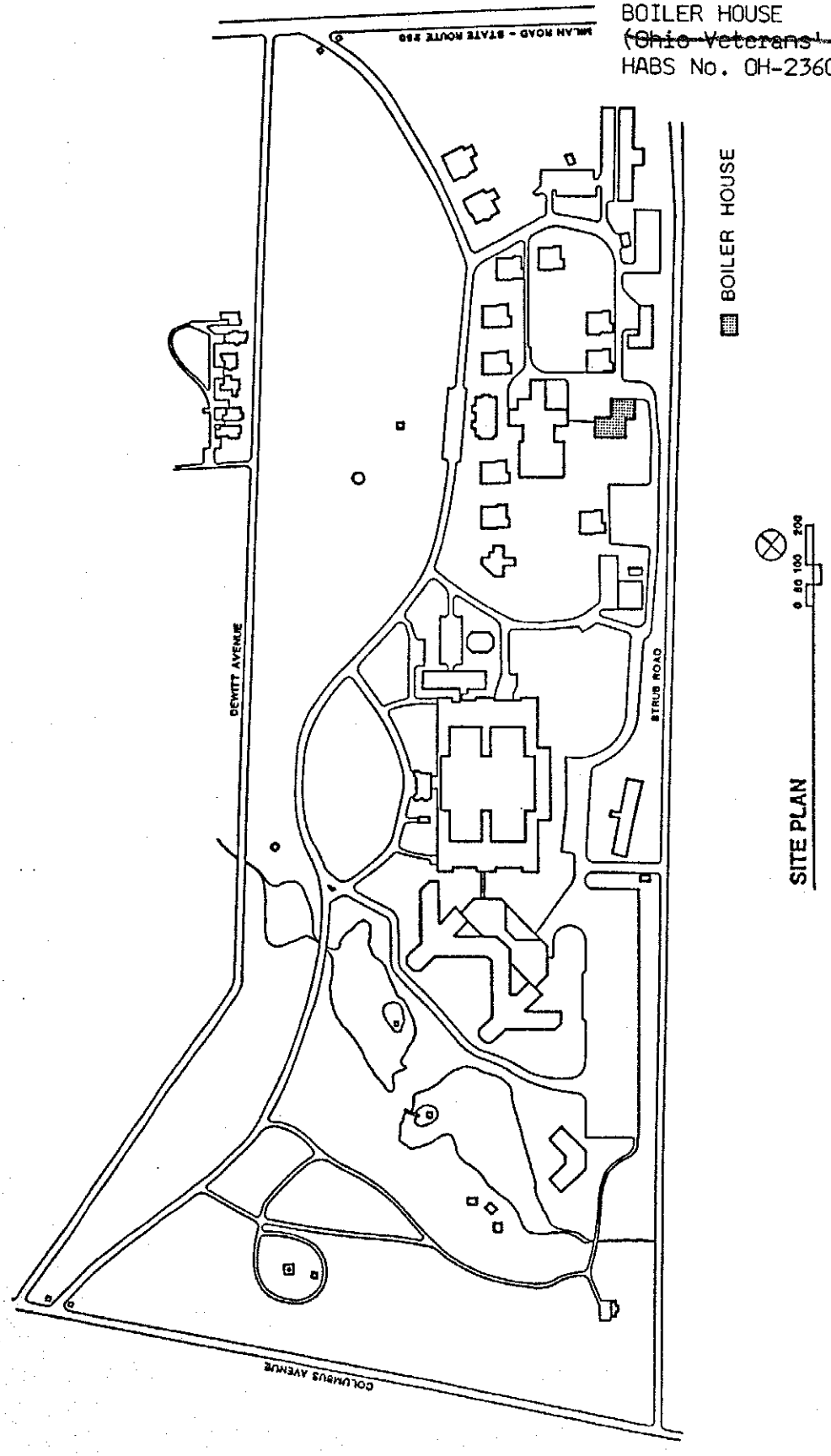
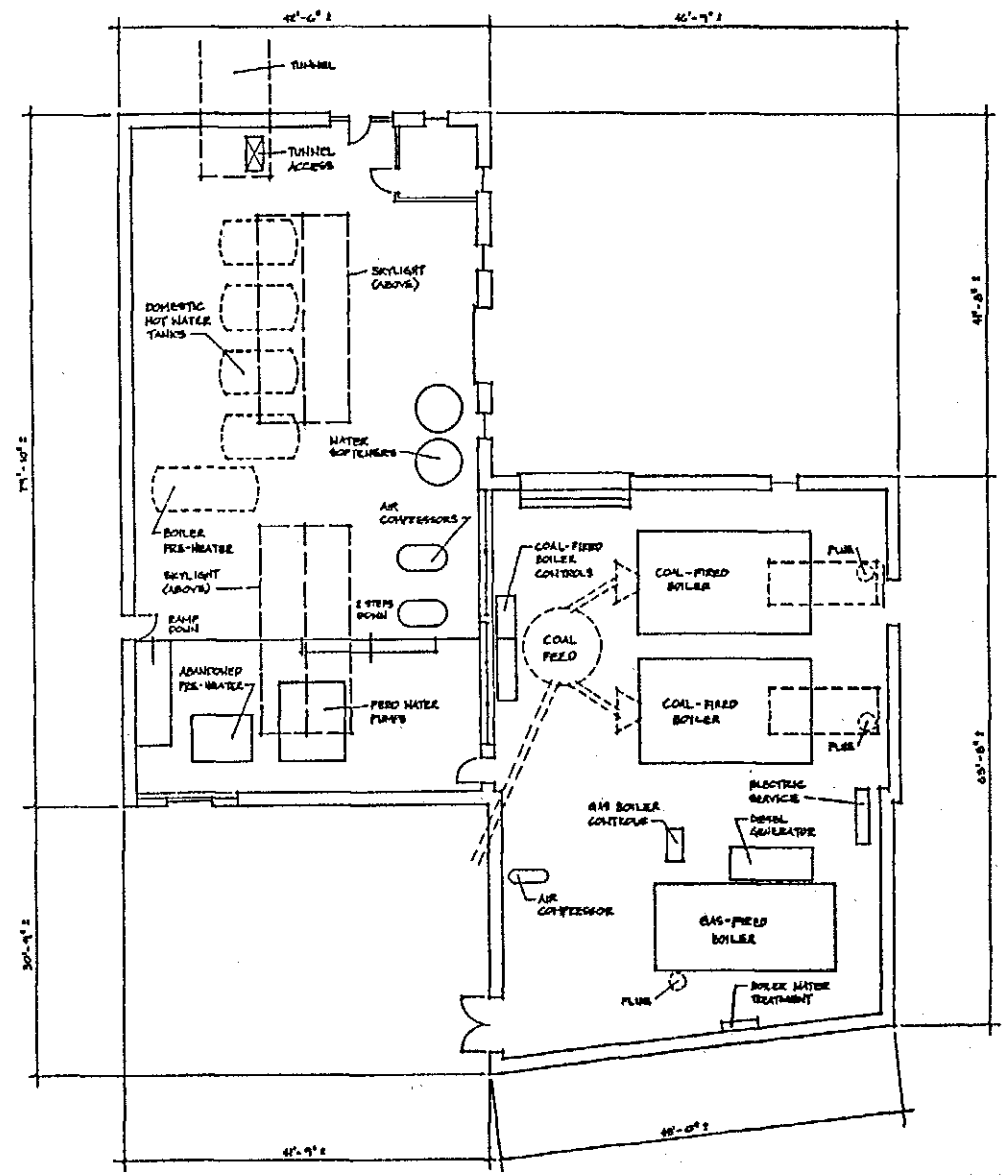
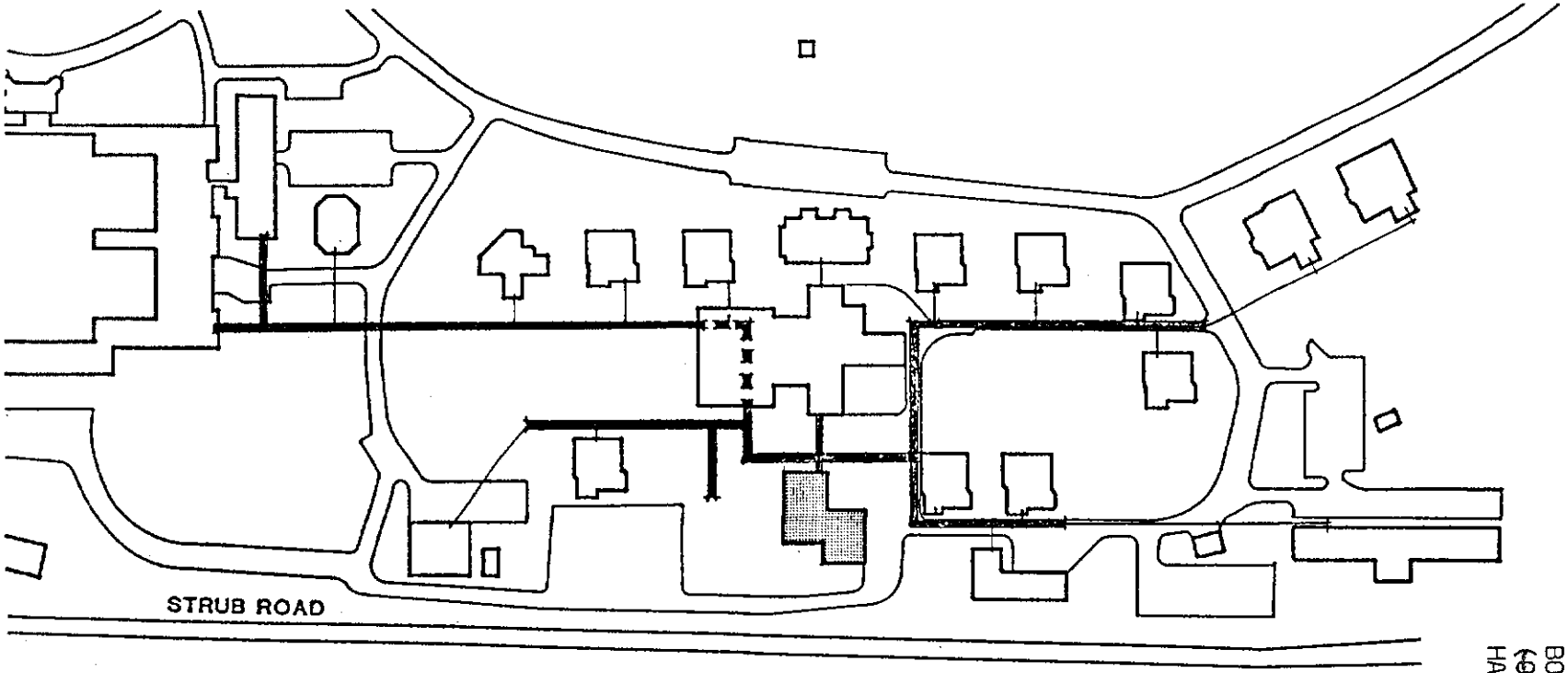




BOILER HOUSE



Boiler House

Mech. Tunnel
Mech. Piping to Buildings

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SITE PLAN

MECHANICAL DISTRIBUTION

OHIO SOLDIERS' AND SAILORS' HOME,
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